

TESTIMONY

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

Re: Proposed S.B. No. 706 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL INTERSECTION SAFETY SYSTEMS; Proposed S.B. No. 822 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY; Proposed H.B. No. 6178 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF TRAFFIC CAMERAS BY MUNICIPALITIES; Proposed H.B. No. 6179 AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO OPERATE INTERSECTION SAFETY CAMERA SYSTEMS.

February 14, 2011

To Members of the Transportation Committee

I am a private citizen, taxpayer and homeowner in New Haven, CT, writing in strong support of red light camera legislation here in the city and also in our state. I believe that the cameras are long overdue, and will be a positive addition to plans to make our streets safer for everyone.

I went to graduate school here 11 years ago, but didn't own a car. My limited experience driving here back then didn't prepare me for the warzone that I now find the streets here to be, after having moved back here in 2006 for a university teaching position. I recall a good friend coining a joke that went, "What's red light in New Haven? A New Haven Green." I honestly don't know that I want to stay here much longer, and a key component of that feeling towards my community as not being a place to stay in, to raise children in, is how I feel every time I leave my house – whether it is by car, bike or on foot. Drivers here are often overly aggressive and impatient, and do not exhibit any courtesy towards one another, and often drive in a way that exhibits an utter disregard for bodily safety, not to mention psychological well-being. I have been outspoken to the local police department and government over the past few years about traffic calming strategies, red light cameras and increased police enforcement of speeding, aggressive driving, red light running and cellphone use while driving. Mind you, I am not coming from a peaceful, rural place – I moved here from Brooklyn, where I lived and had a car there for the better part of 10 years. We had red light cameras in NYC, and it kept people from plowing through intersections.

In New Haven, red light running is a very serious problem. Police officers in Connecticut do not have enough resources to adequately enforce red light

violations. They can't be everywhere at once Through better enforcement of red light running, this bill will reduce injuries and car crashes, and save lives. This bill would give these communities the option of installing red light cameras to make our streets more walk-able, bike-able and safer. Since moving here 5 years ago, I have been shocked and dismayed by the unsafe behavior of other drivers out on the streets. It is clear that our area needs more enforcement in order to make people behave in a sensible manner towards one another. It is sad, but true, that congenial behavior must be legislated here. The city and state has given New Haven scofflaws umpteenth chances to do the right thing, but many drivers will not obey the laws, because they think no one is watching.

Speaking of being watched, I want to say that opponents who say that this is a violation of our civil liberties are grasping at straws. We are already being taped by security cameras everywhere: in private stores like Walmart or Target, on the streets (like on Chapel), in the train station, on I-95, et cetera. There is no reasonable expectation of privacy on a public, urban street or roadway, period. Adding traffic cameras to save lives and make the streets a more reasonable place to drive or walk will not take away anyone's rights. If anything, it adds to our right to the pursuit of happiness as we live our lives and move through our city.

In 24 other states, red light cameras have been proven to make streets safer. Please help do the right thing and welcome them here, where they are sorely needed to make this city a far better place to live.

Sincerely,

Lisa K.
New Haven, CT